

# Hepatitis C and Baby Boomers

## What is hepatitis C (HCV)?

Hepatitis C is a disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). It primarily affects the liver and over time may damage the liver and the overall health of an individual. The liver is a “non-complaining” organ, so three out of four persons infected with hepatitis C may experience only very mild or no symptoms at all until many years after initial infection. However, they can still spread the disease even if no symptoms are present. If left untreated, hepatitis C may lead to chronic liver disease such as cirrhosis of the liver or liver cancer.

## Baby Boomers in Missouri

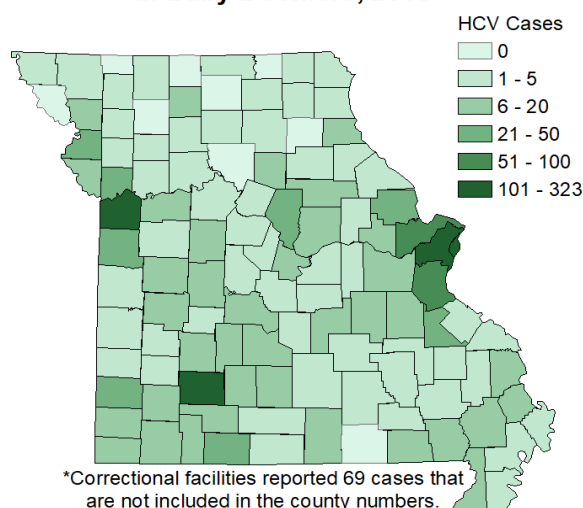
- ◆ Baby Boomers are defined as persons born between 1945 and 1965.
- ◆ In Missouri, there were 1,921 newly diagnosed cases of hepatitis C reported for persons designated as Baby Boomers in 2018.

## Why screen Baby Boomers for HCV?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommend that all persons born between 1945 and 1965 be tested for hepatitis C infection. Baby Boomers are now being diagnosed with chronic hepatitis C and associated complications. Therefore, screening Baby Boomers is important to promote clinical interventions before the occurrence of late stages of disease, which are difficult and costly to treat and decrease life expectancy.

Medicare, Medicaid, and most private insurance will cover the cost of a one-time screening for hepatitis C.

## Reported Cases\* of Hepatitis C in Baby Boomers, 2018



## Chronic Hepatitis C Cases in Baby Boomers, by Sex, 2018

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	1,344	70%
Female	577	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,921</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Risk factors for HCV

- ▶▶ Misusing prescription or street drugs, by injecting or snorting
- ▶▶ Receiving clotting factor concentrates prior to 1987
- ▶▶ Receiving a blood transfusion or an organ/tissue transplant prior to 1992
- ▶▶ Receiving long-term hemodialysis
- ▶▶ Receiving a tattoo or body piercing at an unlicensed or “home” shop
- ▶▶ Direct contact with blood from an infected person

## Why is HCV found more often among Baby Boomers?

**Approximately three of every four U.S. adults who have hepatitis C were born between 1945 and 1965.** This group is more likely to have hepatitis C than other adults and may have gotten infected from medical equipment or procedures before universal precautions and infection control procedures were adopted. Others could have been infected from contaminated blood and blood products before widespread screening virtually eliminated the virus from the blood supply in 1992. The sharing of needles or equipment used to prepare or inject drugs, even if done only once in the past, could have spread hepatitis C. Still, many do not know how or when they were infected.

An EO/AA employer: Services provided on a nondiscriminatory basis. Hearing- and speech-impaired citizens can dial 711.